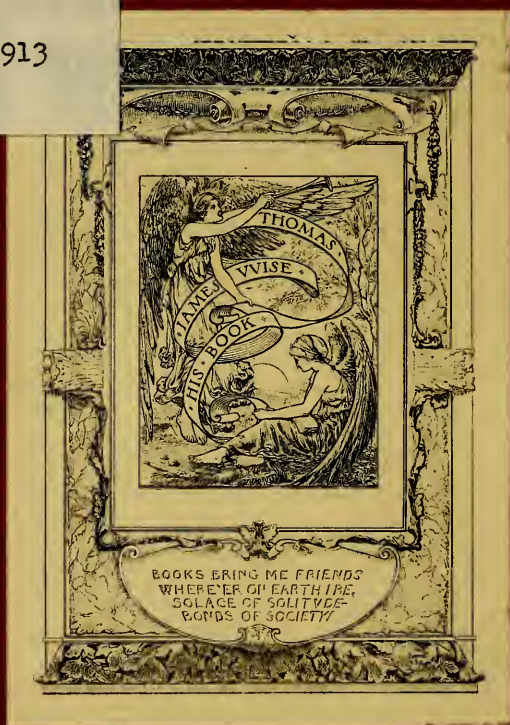




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THE RELATIONS  
OF  
PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY  
WITH  
HARRIET AND MARY



THE RELATIONS  
OF  
PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

*With his Two Wives*

HARRIET AND MARY

AND A COMMENT ON THE CHARACTER OF LADY BYRON

BY  
EDWARD JOHN TRELAWNY

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THE RELATIONS OF SHELLEY WITH  
HARRIET AND MARY

*In Three Letters from*

EDWARD JOHN TRELAUNY to CLARA JANE CLAIRMONT

LETTER I

7 PELHAM CRESCENT,

BROMPTON.

*July 10th, 1857.*

MY DEAR CLARE,

When you write tell me about Shelley's idiosyncrasies, his follies—he was always a boy. And tell me about his first wife Harriet. Was she in fault in any way? The Poet was the slave of his imagination. Inconstancy is natural to man,

however it may be with women. Everything spoils by use. The laws of nature and the laws of society are always at war. Strong necessity compels the millions to submit, but many will not. Everything is imaginary. There is nothing real ; we do not see with the same eyes. " The dream we call life " is a farce, and our little game is nearly played out. In looking back with a calm eye, how very foolish our lives seem. Vanity and folly without aim or object. Nothing done but what would be better if not done. The only solace is that we are all in the donkey race.

Mind my wish to know something of Shelley and Harriet is for my own satisfaction ; I burn as soon as read. I am one of the poet's apostles, and have always done my best to elevate him. His good far exceeds his errors, and the best of the humans has little to brag of. We blunder and brag, die and are forgot, and some other fool takes our place. Jane \* hangs on to life as if loath to leave it ; most people do the same. The infirmity of age has not yet come

\* Jane Hogg, formerly Jane Williams.



upon me. But I cling to life. Age is tedious from its monotony. I am tired of doing the same thing day by day. Age has no pleasures. We must grin and bear it as best we can.

To the last I am,

Your Friend,

E. J. TRELAWNY.

\* \* \* "*I burn as soon as read.*" This was not strictly true. Trelawny preserved at least a portion of the letters received by him from Clare. These, which dealt chiefly with Byron and Shelley matters, were lent by Trelawny to William Rossetti, who copied them and afterwards lent me the transcripts. But Trelawny did, I believe, destroy everything before his death. And Trelawny did not desire Clare's recollections for his "own satisfaction" solely. He was seeking material for use in his *Recollections of the Last Days of Shelley and Byron*, published in the following year, 1858.—T. J. W.

## LETTER II

EDWARD TRELAWNY *to* JANE CLAIRMONT7 PELHAM CRESCENT,  
BROMPTON, S.W.*April 3rd, 1870.*

MY DEAR CLARE,

You are and always were a ready pen. Your interesting letter of the 19th March. You talk of your wet and stormy winter of three months. We have had five months of frost and fog. Last Sunday it was snowing heavily, and our nights are still freezing. The darkness of winter is oppressing. I don't give way to Winter—never omit a cold Bath in the morning. Walk to town at 8 P.M., and return here at 11—and that is five miles. I go on as I have been accustomed with diminished force, and shall do so until I am stopped. Warm clothing and caudling I abhor. Everything that

old folks do I do not, and I reap the benefit in retaining health and strength free from all ailments.

You should read the book, and not the review, of *Medora Leigh*. With a very few exceptions Hogg's *Life* is very interesting and admirably written. The most offensive is his saying "Shelley was incapable of speaking or distinguishing truth from falsehood."

You have so long nourished your hatred of Byron that you cannot judge him fairly. Moral diseases are transmitted as physical ones are, and Byron did exactly as his father had done. As to Lady Byron, she was a rabid fanatic; remorseless, revengeful as all bigots are. In short she was a Byron without his genius, or indeed any redeeming quality. Byron met his match in her.

It is well observed that we should not be vexed that we cannot make other people what we wish them to be, for we cannot make ourselves what we wish to be. So we must each follow our own path until death's hounds drive us into our burrows.

Mary Shelley's jealousy must have sorely vexed

Shelley. Indeed she was not a suitable companion for the poet. His first wife Harriet must have been more suitable. Mary was the most conventionable slave I ever met. She even affected the pious dodge, such was her yearning for society. She was devoid of imagination and Poetry. She felt compunction when she had lost him. She did not understand or appreciate him—

*Like the base Judean, who threw a pearl away  
Richer than all his tribe.*

I have tried quite long enough, and am quite ready to be extinguished. To avoid dying by inches is all I ask—sudden death. Shelley and Williams after all were lucky—they were not more than a minute, and life is not worth much after thirty.

Affectionately yours,

E. J. TRELAWNY.

LETTER III

EDWARD TRELAWNY *to* JANE CLAIRMONT

7 PELHAM CRESCENT,  
BROMPTON, S.W.

*November 9th, 1872.*

MY DEAR OLD FRIEND,

Summer is came and gone, and another year will soon be heaped upon our shoulders, and we are already overburthened with them; as the poet used to exclaim when Mary teased him, "I bear what I can and suffer what I must." How she worried him with her jealousy and wailing—she did not know his value until she lost him. That is not uncommon—she would have been better matched with a conventional common-place man of the world, that went to church and parties. As she grew older and saw something of the world

and its absurdities she saw her folly, and looked back with bitter remorse at her past life. Who can look back with satisfaction? Not me. I am amazed at the vanity and folly of my past life. There is hardly an act I approve of. My first impulses were often good, but I seldom acted on them—I seldom saw things as they were, vanity and imagination deluded me. We are a world of fools and mad people, and I shan't regret leaving it. Men vaunt of their reason, but act as blind passion prompts. They are envious and malignant, and women are jealous and vindictive. This is the result of my experience! What is yours?

Jane \* is fading and failing bodily and mentally. I hold my own in both so far, as I hope you do. Captain Roberts, the man who gave you so much trouble to provide food for at Spezzia, died two years ago at Maddalena near Sardinia at the age of 90.

I am most of my time in the Country by the Sea two miles from Worthing. A niece keeps house

\* Jane Hogg.

for me. I have a daughter at Rome.\* She was with me this summer, but don't like our winters. Near relations I consider are our natural foes.

You see I am not altered ; as unconventional as I always was.

Adieu my dear Clare,

Affectionately and faithfully

E. J. TRELAWNY.

\* Mrs. Call, wife of Colonel Call of the Royal Engineers, from whom I purchased the copy of the First Edition of *Œdipus Tyrannus* given by Shelley to Trelawny.—T. J. W.





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